

Mughal historians and the memory of the Islamic conquest of India

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The Mughal historian ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni wrote his work of history *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* in the last decades of the sixteenth century. This work has been closely read only in its latter parts, and the resulting image of the author, as derived from the text, is one of a venomous and fundamentalist theologian who had opposed the conciliatory policies of the emperor Akbar towards his Hindu subjects. However, by analysing the first volume of this work, which deals with the pre-Mughal history of India, and comparing it with the work of the contemporary historian, Nizam al-Din Ahmad, one can detect a systematic pattern of editing by Badauni with far-reaching implications. Badauni was staunchly anti-absolutist and had displayed a kind of identification with India and its population from diverse status and persuasions that superceded dynastic and even strictly religious affiliation. To properly evaluate Badauni’s contribution to Mughal intellectual and cultural history, we need to heed the older intellectual traditions to which he was heir, and place him in the context of the rise of absolutism and the religio-social upheavals (such as that of the millenarian mahdavi movement) in sixteenth-century western Eurasia.

I

Despite some effort to the contrary,¹ two figures are seen to have stood diametrically opposed at the head of an intense period of historiography during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605). On the one hand is Abu al-Fazl ‘Allami (d. 1602), the intimate of the emperor, praised by most modern scholars for his ‘rationalism’, ‘tolerance’,² ‘complete absence of religious

¹ Mainly by Blochman, ‘Badaoni and his works’, pp. 105–44; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*; and Abbas, *Abdul Qadir*.

² Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, p. 495.

fanaticism', and 'secular' vision.³ He wrote the *Akbarnamah*, an encomium on the ruling monarch, in which he propagated the ideas of *sulh-i kull* ('universal peace'), seen by most as an attempt to create harmony among the multi-religious subject population of the Mughal throne.⁴ Opposite Abu al-Fazl is placed 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni (d. 1615), author of the *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* ('Choice of Histories'), censured, or at least noted, by moderns as a 'fundamentalist' mullah,⁵ a 'narrow-minded' Sunni,⁶ 'rigid and orthodox',⁷ 'crabbed and bigoted',⁸ who opposed rancorously every single prevalent idea-camp of his age⁹ (but especially those of Abu al-Fazl), and lobbied for the enforcement of Islamic law (*shari'ah*) at the expense of the 'unorthodox' multitudes.

This modern viewpoint, as attractive as it may be for its clear-cut polarisation, actually runs into difficulties when one reads the two texts in their entirety. For, although there exists an obvious conflict of vision between the two authors in those parts of their histories that treat the events of Akbar's reign (and it is exactly over these passages that most modern debates hover), those few scholars who have investigated the 'pre-Mughal' sections in each text have run into a paradox. Indeed, while the parsimonious 'medieval/mythical' part of the *Akbarnamah* predictably narrates a teleology of great kingship that reached perfection in the person of the emperor, the much more extensive history of the sultans of old in the *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*, although still in opposition to Abu al-Fazl, shows no clear pattern of nostalgia or glorification of former Sunni kings. One would expect Badauni to set against Akbar the example of some great 'orthodox' monarch who wiped out infidelity and laid the yoke of the *shari'ah* on the necks of all. However, this is not so.

This seeming paradox is in fact illusory. The same logic that operates in the latter parts of Badauni's history also fashions the earlier section. Moreover, when one reads the first volume of the *Muntakhab* closely and in comparison with its main sources, a pattern will develop that will shed more light on the author's attitudes and positions towards the past on the one hand, and towards the emperor Akbar on the other, with whom, remarkably, Badauni had many ideas in common. Before anything else, one must take into account the historiographical context of the 1590s when a number of monumental compositions were created both at Akbar's court and under the patronage of a minor rival in the Deccan. It will be seen that much of the groundwork for the *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*, as well as other histories, was laid by Nizam al-Din Ahmad (d. 1594), who wrote a chronicle of Muslim kingship in India, the first of its kind in almost 200 years. Nizam al-Din's text was important not only for its delimitation of subject matter, but also for a discriminating selection of sources for the Islamic conquest of India

³ Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography*, p. 86.

⁴ See especially Roychoudhury, *The Din-i-Ilahi*.

⁵ Abbas, *Abdul Qadir*, p. 165.

⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, p. 201.

⁷ Mukhia, *Historians*, p. 105.

⁸ Beveridge (tr.), *Akbar Nama*, pp. x–xi.

⁹ Mukhia, *Historians*, p. 98.

that had far-reaching consequences. In effect, Nizam al-Din was positing a destiny and heritage for Islam in South Asia that was marked by some degree of inclusiveness for, and incorporation of, subjugated populations. Badauni took this position and pushed it further. Basing his history mainly on Nizam al-Din's text, Badauni made subtle and not-so-subtle editorial changes in his source that displayed many conciliatory gestures towards a broad canopy of Indians from various persuasions and status (even those with whom he disagreed in principle), promoting, on the one hand, the spread of the rule of Islam in the subcontinent by local Muslim kings, while on the other hand censuring the savagery of Muslim conqueror-kings from Central Asia. In short, both Nizam al-Din, and, more strongly, Badauni, exhibited a kind of proprietary identification with India and its past, its kings and its population.

After reading the earlier parts of the *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* with an eye on the author's Hanafi treatise the *Najat al-Rashid* (written almost contemporaneously with the history and cross-referencing many of the same episodes) in order to merely reinforce the observations made regarding the work of history, and not to subject the latter text to anything resembling a close analysis,¹⁰ one can abstract a number of generalisations about Badauni's thought as historian and thereby re-examine the author's statements in the context of the late sixteenth century. First and foremost, he hated and disparaged royal absolutism, especially as it claimed divine sanction. This was clearly directed at Akbar. He also ridiculed many of the prominent 'ulema of the past. Moreover, while promoting the cause of Sunni Islam, the author also made a few statements that echoed the emperor in his most conciliatory moments (as seen by modern scholars) towards the Hindu population. In much of these, Badauni came very close to the ideas of the egalitarian, millenarian, and socially active *mahdavi* movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with which, it has long been known, the author had strong sympathies. At the same time, he was also drawing on an old tradition of Islamic political thought in which he certainly felt quite at home. The interplay of both these traditions with Badauni's writings ought to be explored further. The objective here has been to evaluate Badauni's role as historian with the hopes that the observations made presently would move the scholarship one step further towards the ultimate goal of reassessing his contributions to Mughal cultural and intellectual history as a whole; or, in other words, to restore to him the kind of appreciation that he had enjoyed among his contemporaries, even those whom he criticised, such as the poet Fayzi (brother of Abu al-Fazl).¹¹ Essentially, the aim is to open the author's work to a type of analysis to which his near contemporary Ottoman colleague Mustafa Ali,¹² the Ghaznavid historian Bayhaqi,¹³ and Persian historiographers up to the thirteenth century¹⁴ have been subjected in the last few decades.

¹⁰ See Zilli, 'Badayuni Revisited', pp. 3–33.

¹¹ For Fayzi's views of Badauni see Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'A Place in the Sun', pp. 301–2.

¹² Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*.

¹³ Waldman, *Toward a Theory*.

¹⁴ Meisami, *Persian Historiography*. Downloaded from <http://jiv.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

II

We will begin with the last decade of the sixteenth century in which a number of landmark Indo-Persian historical works were composed. Akbar himself had set off this explosive phase of historiography when in 1585 he ordered a team of scholars to compile a monumental chronicle of Islamdom to mark the first *hijri* millennium. By 1592, more than half of the *Millennial History* ('*Tarikh-i Alfi*') had gone through its final editing. Shortly thereafter, one of the collaborators of this project,¹⁵ one Khwajah Nizam al-Din Ahmad (d. 1594), a soldier, scholar, statesman and trustee of the emperor, composed in 1592–93 his *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, a groundbreaking innovation in subject matter in which the author wrote a history of Muslim kingship strictly in India (consciously apart from the rest of the Islamic world), from the Ghaznavid conquest up to his day.¹⁶ Nizam al-Din's accomplishment was crucial and will be dealt with below. 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni (d. 1615), scholar and translator, friend of Nizam al-Din, took his cue from his deceased associate and wrote his own history of Muslim India, probably in 1595–96, but did so secretly and in opposition to Akbar. Abu al-Fazl 'Allami (d. 1602) had brought his *Akbarnamah* to near completion by 1596, chronicling the events of the reign of the emperor. About a decade later Muhammad Qasim Hindu-Shah Astarabadi, better known as Firishtah, wrote in 1607 a history of India for his patron Ibrahim 'Adilshah in the Deccan, starting with the Ghaznavid invasions all the way up to the affairs of the reigning monarch of his age.¹⁷ Although not in Agra, Firishtah's main model had also been Nizam al-Din's *Tabaqat*, where he seems to have got the idea of writing a chronicle devoted strictly to the Islamic past of the subcontinent. Indeed, Firishtah's work stands in contrast to his predecessors and contemporaries who, like himself, worked outside the Mughal court. Khurshah b. Qubad Husayni (d. 1564 or 1565), for example, wrote for Nizam Shah I of Ahmadnagar, and his *Tarikh-i Ilchi-i Nizam Shah* or *Tarikh-i Qutbi*, a chronicle very much in the style of the older universal histories, focusing mostly on pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran (including the Safavids), gave a briefer account of the sultans of India. Or otherwise, Rafi' al-Din Ibrahim Shirazi (b. 1540/1) brought to an end in 1611–12 his *Tazkirat al-Muluk*, focusing more narrowly on the reign of Firishtah's patron dynasty, the 'Adilshahids.¹⁸ Thus, Firishtah's history is comparable in both scope and content to the above-mentioned compositions produced at Akbar's court, and hence inspired by Nizam al-Din's *Tabaqat*. In turn, the so-called *Tarikh-i Firishtah* was one of the earliest of the foregoing catalogue of books to be translated into English, in 1794 no less, and proved of great importance for British Orientalist scholarship of the nineteenth century.

¹⁵ Mukhia, *Historians*, p. 139.

¹⁶ Storey, *Persian Literature*, p. 433; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, p. 277.

¹⁷ Storey, *Persian Literature*, pp. 442–46.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 742–43; Ernst 'Ebrahim Shirazi', Downloaded from <http://elr.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

As can be seen, Nizam al-Din had laid the groundwork for his successors by writing a work of history that treated the past of South Asia as a subject separate from the rest of the Islamic world. However, Nizam al-Din's innovation was not merely formal. He did more than simply excerpt and rearrange the Indian passages out of *Tarikh-i Alfi* and other comprehensive histories available to him. Indeed, Nizam al-Din's writing a history of Hindustan also implied a concern both for destiny and heritage; in other words, an interest in positing a kind of essential quality of Islamic rule in India, such that presumably was meant to be realised, or had been fully realised, during the reign of Akbar. However, Nizam al-Din's redefinition of the first establishment of Muslim monarchy in the subcontinent did not manifest itself via a philosophical prologue as in the case of a historian like Ibn Khaldun or of the Ghaznavid historian Abu al-Fazl Bayhaqi. Rather, our author made a radical departure from the practice of all the major compilers of Persian-language universal chronicles since the fourteenth century (such as Rashid al-Din, Mir Khvand, Khvandamir, and even the authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*) by discarding the standard and foundational source for the events of the first Muslim invasion of India.

Nizam al-Din had begun his history with the account of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna and his father Sebüktegin, both of whom he implicitly credited with planting the seeds of Muslim kingship in the subcontinent.¹⁹ The natural choice of historical source for Nizam al-Din should have been the *Yamini* of Abu Nasr al-'Utbi. Written in Arabic around the year 1020, 'Utbi's *Yamini* was the earliest (surviving) specimen of dynastic history in Islamic historiography. It contained epic-like descriptions of the invasion of India by Sultan Mahmud, was translated into Persian in the early thirteenth century, and proved to be of immense popularity for hundreds of years among both historians and literati (*adibs*) all over western, central and southern Asia. And yet, Nizam al-Din decided to abandon 'Utbi for a younger contemporary of his, a man by the name of 'Abd al-Hayy Gardizi, who had composed another history of Mahmud and entitled it *Zayn al-Akhbar* or 'Adornment of Historical Reports'. The significance of Nizam al-Din's shift cannot be understated. For, while 'Utbi's account was based closely on Mahmud's victory proclamations and thus gloried in the *sturm und drang* of Ghaznavid campaigns in the subcontinent, Gardizi's account was as much based on the author's own personal remembrances and evinced a far more inclusive and conciliatory attitude towards the local population of India. This implies that by starting his *Tabaqat-i Akbari* with Gardizi's account of Mahmud of Ghazna, Nizam al-Din was positing a heritage (past) and perhaps destiny (ideal future) of Muslim monarchy in India that was marked by some degree of inclusiveness and cooperation with subjects and subjugated peoples.

¹⁹Nizam al-Din was not the first to do this. Before him the fourteenth-century poet/historian 'Isami had begun his *Futuh al-Salatin* with Sebüktegin's dream foreshadowing the birth of Mahmud (which the poet seems to have found in Juzjani's *Tabaqat-i Nasiriyah*).

Gardizi had written his history around 1050. The text has survived in only two manuscripts, the one being a copy of the other. The older manuscript dates to either 1497 or 1523.²⁰ Based on provenance notes, it can be established that the manuscript was circulating in India in 1744, before it found its way to Cambridge. A.H. Habibi, who edited the text in 1968, suspected that this was the very manuscript Nizam al-Din had used to compose his *Tabaqat*. Although Habibi did not give his reasoning for this supposition, a comparison between his edition and the *Tabaqat* shows obvious verbatim agreement in most places. At least, we know that Nizam al-Din was familiar with Gardizi's work (mentioning him in his preface as one of his sources), and that the only surviving manuscripts of Gardizi were in India (with a production date close to Nizam al-Din's age).

III

As his name implies, Gardizi had some connection, by birth or habitation, with the city of Gardiz in the southeastern part of today's Afghanistan. The social conditions of the city in which the author spent at least his formative years were responsible for his perception and remembrance of the events in South Asia during the years of Ghaznavid incursions there. This quality is crucial and will be discussed later in detail. But first, a passage from the *Zayn al-Akhbar* describing some of Mahmud's battles must be quoted and analysed, and finally further explained after a very close look at the minute biographical information on its author. The passage narrates the encounters between Mahmud and the Indian king Ganda. It runs as follows:

Mahmud dispatched messengers to [the Indian king] Ganda,²¹ counseling him and giving him promises in order to wake him up. He warned and admonished him saying, 'Become a Muslim and be safe from all this warring, suffering, and harm.' Ganda answered, 'I will have nothing to do with you but war!'

I have heard from a number of trusty friends that on that day, the amir [Mahmud], God bless him, went up a high place in order to have a good look at Ganda's soldiers. He looked, and he saw the whole world full of tents, pavilions, foot soldiers, horsemen, and elephants. Regret began to beset the corner of his heart. So he beseeched God most high to give him victory. When night fell, God cast a great fear in Ganda's heart, and he picked up his army and ran off. The next day the amir [Mahmud] sent a messenger. When he reached Ganda's campsite, he did not see a single soul. All their equipment was abandoned, all the people were gone, and all the mounts and elephants had been taken.

²⁰ See the article by M. Qazvini, reproduced in the introduction to A.H. Habibi's critical edition of the *Zayn al-Akhbar*.

²¹ Some words modified following Nazim, *Life and Times*. Downloaded from <http://er.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

The messenger came back and notified Amir Mahmud. He [Mahmud] ordered them to search all the hiding places and look for the enemy. They were all gone. The amir thanked God almighty and ordered Ganda's campsite be pillaged. Countless goods of all sorts were looted, and from there, he returned toward Ghazna triumphantly. Along the way, they chanced upon a meadow. The army entered it. They found 580 of Ganda's elephants. They drove them all and brought them to the campsite.

Afterwards, it was brought to the amir's attention that there are two valleys. One is called Qirat, the other Nur. They are well-fortified places, and their people are kafirs who worship lions. So [Mahmud] set out against those valleys along with his army. He ordered that numerous laborers—ironsmiths, carpenters, and stonemasons—go with the army and carve out roads, cut down trees, and demolish rocks. When they got there, they first set out for Qirat. Qirat is a pleasant place, and its people worship lions. Its air is cold and has plenty of fruit. When the king of Qirat got word of this, he came forward, showed obedience, and asked for mercy.

Amir Mahmud, God bless him, received him, and showed him kindness. The king of Qirat became a Muslim, and so too did many of the inhabitants of Qirat in imitation of that king. They accepted teachers and began learning the obligations and enacting the laws. But the people of Nur showed stubbornness. Therefore Amir Mahmud commanded the chamberlain 'Ali son of Il-Arsalan al-Qarib to go to Nur, conquer it, and build a fort there. He then made him the magistrate of that fort and ordered him to force Islam on their necks by coercion and with the sword. They accepted it, like it or not, and so Islam appeared in that land. And the conquest of Nur and Qirat was in the year 411/1020.²²

This passage does not hide the looting, conquering and forceful subjugation of people. But clearly, it also shows how pagans could enter the fold of the Ghaznavid kingdom by accepting the suzerainty of Islam. The amir showed kindness to the inhabitants who converted 'voluntarily'. Even those who refused at first were given a second chance. All this is a far cry from the kind of description and language that one generally finds in 'Utbi. Ganda, too, who seems to be playing the role of chief villain here by refusing to come to his senses and avoid war by accepting Islam, was later given a second chance and allowed into the community. Further down on the same page, Gardizi mentioned how after being surrounded in his fort of Kalinjar in 1023, Ganda surrendered, agreed to pay *jizya*, and even composed a poem in praise of Mahmud. Gardizi's text reads,

Then Ganda composed a poem for Amir Mahmud in the Indian language and sent it to him. Amir Mahmud ordered that the poem be presented to all Persian, Arabic, and Indian poets. They all liked it and said that nothing loftier and

²² Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhar*, pp. 184–85; Nizam al-Din, *Tahqiq*, pp. 13–14.
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more eloquent than this could be spoken. So Amir Mahmud took great pride in it and commanded that a diploma be written for Ganda, [appointing him] as the commander of fifteen forts, and be sent to him. He said, ‘This is the reward for the poem you composed for us.’²³

Here, Ganda did not even have to convert to Islam. He accepted the overlordship of Muslims and was therefore included in the Ghaznavid imperial machinery. But why would Gardizi be so interested in such events? Why should he have emphasised them so much in his book? The answer lies in the social conditions of tenth–eleventh century Gardiz—the city from which he derived his name.

Vladimir Minorsky was perhaps the first scholar to try to situate Gardizi in his historical context. In the introductory notes to his partial translation of the text, entitled ‘Gardizi on India’, Minorsky observed a number of curious elements. First, the city with which he was associated, namely Gardiz, was noticed in the anonymous Persian geographical treatise *Hudud al-‘Alam* (Regions of the World), compiled in 982, as a ‘frontier town between Ghazna and India, situated on top of a mound and possessing a strong fortress with three walls. The inhabitants are Kharijites’.²⁴ Also, Minorsky took Gardizi’s quoting of a man called Hamd b. Walak Gardizi as evidence of the author’s continued connection with his native town.²⁵ At the same time, as A.H. Habibi had indicated, the author must have spent a good portion of his time in Ghazna, especially around the time of the composition of the book (ca. 1050). The evidence for this assertion he found in two quotations within the *Zayn al-Akhbar*. The first is Gardizi’s claim to have met Abu Rayhan al-Biruni who died in Ghazna on 13 December 1048.²⁶ The second is an observation made by the author regarding the weather in Ghazna. The text reads, ‘In the 8th day of [the month of] Azar,²⁷ swallows can be seen in Ghazna, and the weather becomes pleasant.’²⁸ Based on these references, Habibi concluded that he must have been a resident of Ghazna at some point.

So, it appears that the author of *Zayn al-Akhbar* was either/both born in Gardiz or/and lived there for sometime, but at a certain point in his life moved to Ghazna while maintaining his connections with his native city. But what of Gardizi’s Gardiz? Minorsky has already mentioned three elements for which it was known at the end of the tenth century: (*i*) its position right on the Indian frontier; (*ii*) its population of Kharijites; (*iii*) its strong fort. This is indeed a succinct description of a city, succinct but pregnant. All three have a bearing on Gardizi and his worldview.

The presence of the Kharijites in what is today southeastern Iran and southern Afghanistan goes back to early Islamic times. Using the main literary source for

²³ Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*, p. 186; Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 15.

²⁴ Minorsky, ‘Gardizi’, p. 625. Translation slightly altered.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Habibi, p. Jim, in Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*; Minorsky, ‘Gardizi’, p. 10.

²⁷ Corresponding to the zodiac house of Sagittarius, 22 Nov.–21 Dec.

²⁸ Habibi, p. Dol, in Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*. Downloaded from <http://nrs.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

the history of this region, an anonymous mid-eleventh century text called 'The History of Sistan', Bosworth has argued that after the defeat of the antinomian and rather zealous Kharijite sect in Iraq during Umayyad times, some members of the sect headed east to Kirman, Sistan and Sind.²⁹ The greatest of these, a leader by the name of Hamza b. 'Abd Allah, even managed to force the 'Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid to recognise him as the local governor of Sistan in 797.³⁰ It was probably in this period that Kharijism made its way into Gardiz and possibly Ghazna.³¹ The anonymous 'History of Sistan' even attributes the foundation of Gardiz to a man named Hamza b. Adharak the Kharijite, which Bosworth considers merely as indication of the first implantation of Islam there.³² In the ninth century, Gardiz became the centre of an independent Kharijite principality ruled by a family that seems to have gone by the name 'Aflah'.³³

These Aflahids of Gardiz gave a tough time to the early Ghaznavids and their rise to power. Around the year 974, one of Alptegin's generals and successors, a man by the name of Bilgetegin, was killed under the walls of Gardiz while laying siege to it.³⁴ Under Sebüktigin, the Kharijite era of Gardiz came to an end.³⁵ And it is at this time, near the time when the author of *Zayn al-Akhbar* was born, that a crucial process began in the city of Gardiz. It seems that the Kharijite Aflahid leaders of Gardiz were not wiped out by the early Ghaznavids. Rather, the converted Aflahids entered the Ghaznavid nobility.³⁶ Admittedly, evidence for this process is scant, but the source for it is none other than the *Zayn al-Akhbar*. In other words, as far Gardizi was concerned, the history of the noblemen of his native town entered a new phase by their inclusion through conversion. As for the strong fort of Gardiz, the Ghaznavids had turned it into a prison.³⁷

This brief history of the city of Gardizi's birth shows that the author's emphasis on and notice of inclusion and conversion was in harmony with the immediate social conditions of his native city in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Gardizi had grown up in a city whose leaders had the choice of incorporation into, or suppression by, a power to whose menace the fortress-prison of their own town stood as a reminder. Moreover, the position of this town, right on the Indian frontier, probably had allowed much amicable contact with the non-Muslims of India. The very reference to his countryman Hamd b. Walak Gardizi, noticed by Minorsky, testifies to this beneficial exchange. In a section on the mastery of Indians in the art of medicine, Gardizi told a story he had heard from Hamd in which a man who was bitten by a snake and thought dead by his friends

²⁹ Bosworth, 'Notes', p. 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³² Anonymous, *Tarikh-i Sistan*, p. 24; Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids*, p. 103.

³³ Bosworth 'Notes', p. 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁵ Balland, 'Gardiz', p. 313.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; Bosworth, 'Notes', p. 18.

³⁷ Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*, p. 171; Bayhaqi, *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, p. 649.
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was brought back to consciousness and saved from being buried alive by an Indian ‘who began chanting a spell ... and extracted the poison whence the man was bitten’.³⁸

Therefore, when Gardizi sat down to write his *Zayn al-Akhbar*, what was prominent in his memory of the events he had witnessed, what he wished to emphasise about the raids into India, were exactly those interactions between his own culture and the ‘other’ that involved the potentials of symbiosis. This feature puts the stamp of Gardizi’s authorial individuality on his portrayal of Mahmud’s incursions.

As for Nizam al-Din and his use of Gardizi (as opposed to ‘Utbi) for the recounting of the attacks on India by Mahmud, his choice of source narrative implies a certain concern with the nature of the first implantation of Muslim kingship. By basing his history on Gardizi, Nizam al-Din had abandoned an origin myth rooted in ruthless invasion in favour of one of conquest marked by the possibility of inclusion. This was a major departure from many of the classic works of post-Mongol Persian historiography. It would, moreover, be wrong to suppose that Nizam al-Din’s preference for a more inclusivist source was the result of the conciliatory atmosphere of ‘universal peace’ prevalent at the time in Akbar’s court. If it were so, one would expect a similar undertaking in the contemporary *Tarikh-i Alfī*. But this is not the case. Furthermore, the one other text that was composed at this time with a view to contradicting and condemning Akbar’s policy of *sulh-i kull*, viz., the *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* of ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni, actually maintained the Gardizi text for the reconstruction of the early history of the Ghaznavid dynasty and did not switch back to ‘Utbi’s *Yamini*. If anything, Badauni even emphasised the implicitly conciliatory possibilities of Nizam al-Din’s history.

IV

A comparison of Nizam al-Din and Badauni is particularly instructive. Nizam al-Din was Badauni’s patron and enjoyed the continuous respect of the latter in spite of his close ties with the Mughal court, from which, by the 1590s, Badauni had been completely alienated in matters of principle and ‘ideology’. Badauni’s *Muntakhab* was essentially a counter history, based very closely on Nizam al-Din’s more official *Tabaqat*, but subverting it through mostly subtle editorial interferences. Badauni rewrote Nizam al-Din’s text to give a very different view of the Muslim kings of South Asia. Yet, simultaneously, he emphasised with Nizam al-Din a sense of historical heritage that applauded incorporation and Islamicisation by local rulers as opposed to bloody and destructive incursions by outside conquerors. Nizam al-Din had taken the first step by choosing Gardizi. Badauni took this practice to its logical conclusion and further used it to express his generally anti-absolutist views.

With surgical precision, as if with scalpel in hand, Badauni began trimming down Nizam al-Din’s narrative in an unmistakable pattern. He expunged from

³⁸ Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar*, p. 287.

the accounts of some of the famous Muslim kings of India what he found to be reprehensible or questionable behaviour. For example, Badauni systematically deleted from Nizam al-Din's text those passages that detailed the enslavement of the local population by the early Ghaznavids in their Indian campaigns. So, in the account of Mahmud's father and his first invasion of India, Badauni repeated almost verbatim Nizam al-Din's description but took out 'and [Sebüktigin] brought in slaves and booty'.³⁹ Elsewhere, Badauni left out 'he gained immense booty, in the form of slaves, elephants, or property';⁴⁰ and again '[Mahmud] slaughtered a great population, and gained immense booty, in the form of slaves, elephants, or the fine things of India'.⁴¹ A clue is provided for understanding this aspect of Badauni's editorial practice in another of his writings, namely, his religious treatise called *Najat al-Rashid*, in which the author expressed his distaste for human trafficking. While he was willing to allow it on occasional cases, where, for example, one needed to be relieved of a particular financial predicament, Badauni referred to a Hadith to censure the custom categorically: 'May God curse the man who slaughters cows, cuts down trees, and sells humans', he wrote in forthright words, teaming, curiously enough, the slave trade with butchery and logging.⁴²

Moreover, in composing his *Muntakhab*, Badauni also expunged Nizam al-Din's narrative of the passages that depicted the destruction of Indian temples by Mahmud. So, for example, when recounting the conquest of Mathura by the Ghaznavids, Badauni deleted a fundamental piece of writing from Nizam al-Din's text that read, 'they pillaged the entire city and burned the idol-houses'.⁴³ Or, again, in the episode of the infamous capture of Somnath, Badauni removed the phrase, 'and a great many people were killed or captured, and they destroyed the idol-houses'.⁴⁴ Finally, in the battle narrative of Mahmud's son Mas'ud at Hansi, Badauni left out, 'and they knocked down all the idol-houses'.⁴⁵ To leave out the description of Ghaznavid wreckage of temples is particularly noticeable since Badauni felt no scruples about keeping in those parts of Nizam al-Din's history that detailed the annihilation of the actual statues that were housed in these structures. In other words, it was not religious sympathy for the 'idols' that had led Badauni to take out the passages on the razing of buildings.

Third, the author of *Muntakhab* occasionally discarded those parts of Nizam al-Din's history of Mahmud that showed the monarch's mistreatment of defeated Muslim townsmen or those who had sued for peace. For instance, in the account of Mahmud's capture of the city of Multan, held by 'apostates and Qarmatis' for whom Badauni had little sympathy in general, the last part of the following

³⁹ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 6; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 7; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 7.

⁴¹ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 9; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 8.

⁴² Badauni, *Najat*, p. 264.

⁴³ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 13; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 16; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 23; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 16.
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phrase was nevertheless taken out, '[Mahmud's army] killed most of the Qarmatis and cut off the hands of the others' [emphasis mine].⁴⁶ Or in the description of Mahmud's capture of a fortress in the mountains of Kashmir after the inhabitants had parleyed for amnesty, Badauni deleted the words that read, 'Sultan Mahmud then entered with some of his intimates and seized whatever goods and property that was there'.⁴⁷

Here again statements in the author's *Najat al-Rashid* shed some light on this matter, although admittedly these are extracted from their original context. The censoring of the account of the cutting off of hands may be related to Badauni's apparent horror regarding the mutilation of living beings, be they humans or beasts. Not only did he rail vehemently against the severing of noses and ears of people and animals as a satanic practice that disfigured God's creation,⁴⁸ he even evinced hesitations on the ruling in Islamic law that sanctioned the cutting off of thieves' hands as punishment for their offence. He wrote, 'the boundary of theft is stipulated in the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, to wit, that the value of the stolen good be over 10 legal dirhams, that it be stolen from a protected place, and other conditions and stipulations.... The purpose of this school of law is not the cutting off of folks' hands';⁴⁹ and again, concerning the enforcement of such punishment upon female thieves, he wrote, 'theft is mostly committed by men, and very rarely by women. Furthermore, even if a woman steals an object, it is always something insignificant. God knows best [i.e., I am not sure]'.⁵⁰ As for Badauni's excluding the report of Mahmud's sack of the fortress to whose inhabitants he had promised mercy, it is a strange deletion. Naturally one would expect it to be understood that a city that receives amnesty would pay a sum in exchange for the staying of violence. Did Badauni think the scale of Mahmud's collection was too excessive and therefore amounted to the violation of amnesty (in Nizam al-Din's words, 'he took *whatever* property and goods that were there')? Perhaps another passage in *Najat al-Rashid* can be used to make sense of this matter. Under a section entitled, 'Killing him who has asked for amnesty', Badauni cited a Hadith in contradiction to the ostensible meaning of a Quranic verse to argue that breaking the oath of amnesty, apparently even to non-Muslims, was a sure way of betaking oneself to hell. The last part of this Hadith reads, 'whoever shows no loyalty to him with whom he has made a pact, then I [the prophet Muhammad] am not with that man, nor he with me'.⁵¹ Some ambiguity still remains, but this very point will be clarified further down when dealing with the pages of the *Muntakhab* that dealt with another famous invader—Timur (Tamerlane).

⁴⁶ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 10; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 11; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Badauni, *Najat*, p. 244.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 337 Downloaded from <http://ier.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

Deleting the narratives of Ghaznavid enslavement of Indians, destruction of temples, and mistreatment of defeated people at their mercy—what accounted for this editorial policy by Badauni as he wrote his *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*? These were certainly actions that Badauni found reprehensible. Perhaps he meant to give a better impression of the kings who were credited with the first implantation of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. After all, both Badauni and Firishtah, following Nizam al-Din's scheme, had essentially begun their histories with rise of the house of Sebüktigin and Mahmud. This is possible, but the matter is then complicated by Badauni's closing remarks on Mahmud, which are not there in Nizam al-Din's version. Here, the author added a few lines of poetry that berated the legacy of the Ghaznavid monarch and explicitly pointed out the shortcomings in his character. The first poem reads, 'The glory of Mahmud faded, and nothing was remembered of him except for the legend that he did not honor [the poet] Firdawsi'.⁵² This line, of course, refers to the story of Mahmud's notorious lack of appreciation for the great epic of Firdawsi, the *Shahnamah*. Badauni seems to imply here that for all the battles that he fought and won, only Mahmud's mistreatment of the men of letter of his age would be remembered by succeeding generations. Another poem, purportedly from the old sultan himself, reads, 'I conquered a thousand forts with the pointing of a finger, and I broke many enemy lines by pressing down a foot. But when death rushed upon me, nothing of it availed. The only thing that remains is the durance of God, and the only kingship is God's'.⁵³ Thus it is clear that whatever Badauni thought of Mahmud of Ghazna, he did not seem particularly keen on improving his reputation. On the contrary, he added extra pieces of verse to censure his flaws and dismiss his glory.

In fact Badauni appended similar verses to the end of the accounts of many of the kings whose lives he had chronicled. Thus he wrote at the end of the section on the last of the Ghaznavids, Sultan Khusraw Malik, 'Do not give your hearts to this world, for she is fickle. She is a new bride married to many a groom'.⁵⁴ Further down, he summed up the reign of the Ghurid Sultan Sam with these verses,

Did you see Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad Sam in battle? He was stouter in his heart and arm than the heroes Sam and Nariman. Like Mahmud of Ghazna, he gained the elephants of India, the politics of the Sasanians, and the lands of the Samanids. Yet, he passed from this world, and they say that five hundred measures of weight worth of diamonds remained unused in his secret treasures.⁵⁵

⁵² Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35. Downloaded from <http://ier.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

Likewise, after reporting the death of the Delhi Sultan Iltutmish, Badauni added, ‘The palace that gives pleasure to the heart [the world] is too cold. The moment you feel warm in your place it bids you to rise and depart’.⁵⁶ It can be seen that ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni wanted to have the last word on each heroic king of yore, reminding the audience not to be fooled by the seeming glories of these monarchs, to remember the transience of worldly goods, and to keep in mind the everlasting power of God constantly.

These and similar verses that intersperse Badauni’s *Muntakhab* have sometimes been dismissed as mere formalities that added nothing to the narrative, at times even slowing it down.⁵⁷ Yet these additions illuminate greatly the practice of historiography in this period. The near verbatim agreement of Badauni, Nizam al-Din, and others with their sources suggests an attempt at accuracy, a kind of conscientious effort to stay true to the records of the past as handed down to them. These could be manipulated very subtly by changing a word or omitting a short, but crucial, phrase in the name of brevity, as was the case with Badauni. However, some authors had more opinions on the former sultans than could be expressed by minor editorial deletions. The verses and anecdotes that were inserted into the narrative at key points or at the end of an episode may indicate an intentional strategy on the part of such historians to slow down the narrative on purpose, add material from other sources (poetic anthologies or biographies of poets), and thereby express their own strong viewpoints on a historical figure without, however, violating their main source entirely.

Comparing Badauni’s additions to the narrative of the reign of Mahmud of Ghazna with those of his contemporary, Firishtah, will clarify this point to some degree. For Firishtah too appended anecdotes to the conclusion of Mahmud’s rule in his own book of history, the main source for which was also Nizam al-Din’s *Tabaqat*. But, being more sympathetic toward the Ghaznavid Sultan, Firishtah attached other reports to offset the damaging effect of the critical tales. Thus, after narrating a brief story about Mahmud’s hoarding of jewels, Firishtah added, ‘It is a tale like this that makes people accuse that high-born king of niggardliness’.⁵⁸ Then, following this insertion, Firishtah went on to add anecdote after anecdote in a sort of imaginary dialogue that listed the merits and vices of Mahmud alternatively, until at the end, in the section cataloguing the poets of that era, the author introduced numerous stories that depicted the sultan generously showering jewels and gold on the lyricists and panegyrists who resided at his court.⁵⁹ What therefore distinguished ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni from his contemporary Firishtah was not the addition of verses or seemingly pointless anecdotes to the end of his description of a given monarch’s tenure on the throne. Rather, Badauni’s history is remarkable for its critical attitude towards these sultans, and especially towards the man who was credited with implanting Islam in India—Mahmud of Ghazna.

⁵⁶ Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 46.

⁵⁷ Mukhia, *Historians*, p. 129.

⁵⁸ Firishtah, *Tarikh*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–39. Downloaded from <http://ier.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

Indeed, Badauni's scepticism with regard to heroic kings held in high regard had a further and very curious manifestation. Throughout, his treatment of the Muslim monarchs of South Asia, be they Mahmud of Ghazna or others, the author of *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* methodically edited out any detail that implied the presence of any sort of royal celestiality or supernatural power. Any reader who knows the basic narrative of Indian history in the late sixteenth century will immediately grasp the significance of Badauni's de-divinisation of the sultans of old. Badauni did this from the very first pages of his book. His main source, Nizam al-Din, had found Gardizi's narrative too sparse in detail on the early reign of the Ghaznavids, and had yielded to 'Utbi's *Yamini* (or intermediaries such as Khvandamir or Mir Khvand) to reconstruct the deeds of Sebüktigin and young Mahmud before their rise to prominence in Khurasan. It was in these pages that Nizam al-Din had found the following episode, relating the manipulation of supernatural powers by the Amir Sebüktigin (whom Nizam al-Din mistook for, or intentionally replaced with, his son Mahmud). It ran as follows: 'They say that in those environs there was a spring in which, if accidentally, filth and pollution were to drop, a great wind and snowstorm would break out. Amir Mahmud commanded that polluted matter be poured into that spring. A great wind and snowstorm broke out'.⁶⁰ The report clearly shows the Amir endowed with the ability to exploit paranormal forces for furthering his cause. Nizam al-Din introduced it, but Badauni erased it completely.

Moreover, and perhaps predictably, Badauni exercised his editorial hand on similar passages for the reign of other sultans of India. Thus, for example, he took out the following passage from Nizam al-Din's treatment of Sultan Ibrahim, a descendant of Mahmud: 'In that city there was a pool whose radius was half a parsang. No matter how much water people and cattle would drink of it, that water suffered no visible loss. Also there was such density of forests around that fort that no one could find a way through. Yet, Ibrahim captured such a fortress by his might and power'.⁶¹ Ibrahim is shown capable of reaching a charmed spot, inaccessible to other mortals, but Badauni would have none of it. He left it out of his own history. Again, later on, in the parts dealing with the rule of Sultan Iltutmish, Nizam al-Din quoted the following poem composed in celebration of one of Iltutmish's triumphs: 'Honest Gabriel has reported the victory-proclamations of the sultan of the age, Shams al-Din (Iltutmish), to the residents of heaven, saying "Oh angels, oh holy ones of the sublime firmament, celebrate this good news. The king of kings of Islam has once again conquered the sky-high fortress from the land of the apostates"'.⁶² This little poem showing Iltutmish enjoying the applaud of heaven must have offended Badauni, who deleted it, not only on account of the celestial exaltation of the king, but also because of the use of the title 'king of kings (*Shahanshah*)'. Indeed, when he penned his *Najat al-Rashid*,

⁶⁰ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 6; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 6.

⁶¹ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 33; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 24.

⁶² Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, pp. 59–60; Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 42.
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Badauni specifically warned against the use of this title by earthly monarchs. He wrote, ‘The greatest adversary of God among people is the man who calls himself king of kings (*Shahanshah*), for in truth none but God is king over other kings.’⁶³

Thus the pattern of Badauni’s subtle but crucial editorial procedure over his main source shows that he harboured feelings ranging from the ambivalent to the strongly hostile towards many of the old Muslim kings of India, particularly the heroic conquerors among them such as Mahmud of Ghazna, and also Iltutmish. He abhorred their enslavement of people en masse, he did not seem to favour their destruction of buildings, he did not consider them to be above other mortals in spite of their seemingly dazzling achievements, and he certainly did not abide any report that granted them special access to the supernatural.

However, while this attitude towards royalty manifested itself in the form of minor editorial adjustments or insertion of poetic pieces from various anthologies, on two occasions the author’s position led him to employ the opposite technique, namely additions, both subtle and substantial. This at first may seem paradoxical. Why would Badauni’s distrust of the famous conquerors lead him to minor deletions on the one hand and augmentation on the other? There are two reasons for this, each dependant on the subject matter. In the first instance, namely the narrative of the reign of ‘Ala al-Din Khalji, the misbehaviour of the king was so egregious to the author and so reminiscent of contemporary issues that Badauni fundamentally altered the story in order to foreshadow the passages in his text that dealt with the heretical views of the reigning monarch of the age, namely Akbar. The second instance was of the invasion of Akbar’s ancestor, Timur (Tamerlane). Here, all Badauni had to do was spice up, as it were, the narrative of Nizam al-Din since the latter’s account, as has been shown by Irfan Habib,⁶⁴ was a modified version of an already-critical account of these events. Badauni had only to undo the editorial white-washing of Nizam al-Din by placing censorious key words back into the original narrative.

We begin with ‘Ala al-Din Khalji. Both Nizam al-Din and Badauni (following him) assert that the thirteenth–fourteenth century Delhi Sultan had decided to start a new religion and replace Islam. He had, moreover, decided to become a second Alexander and undertake world conquest. However, at this point Nizam al-Din and Badauni diverge. Nizam al-Din’s version avers that the sultan was dissuaded from both plans by the keeper of the fort of Delhi, who told him that rules and tenets of Islam should not be broken, and that the inhabitants of Delhi were not reliable enough in their loyalty to be left behind for 30 years of campaigning.⁶⁵ Badauni, on the other hand, tweaked the story considerably and even suggested an alternative, or redirecting, of these ideals into something more worthwhile. It runs as follows:

⁶³ Badauni, *Najat*, p. 413.

⁶⁴ Habib, ‘Timur’, p. 302.

⁶⁵ Nizam al-Din, *Tahqiqat*, pp. 145–46.

In the beginning, a number of successive victories took place, and Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Khalji began to entertain some rotten ideas. The first was to establish a new religion with the help of four people, Ulugh Khan, Nusrat Khan, Zafar Khan, and Alp Khan, drawing a comparison between himself on the one hand, and the Prophet Muhammad and his companions on the other. The second was to conquer the regions of the habitable quarter of the world, like Alexander, and thus he registered his name in the Friday sermon and on coins as Alexander II. When he consulted the keeper of the Delhi fort ‘Ala al-Mulk on this matter, the latter opposed the sultan on both accounts, saying, ‘Religions cannot be invented on one’s own without divine confirmation and the sending of miracles. And these will not take place through the power of kingship, wealth, retinues, and servants. Or else, they may, or even certainly will, cause all sorts of strife and great evil, accomplishing little, and leaving behind only regret. As for world-conquest, it is a worthy ambition, but it requires full capability, opportune time, and a vizier like Aristotle—none of which is here at hand. But were the king to rid the forts of India of kafirs and the environs of Delhi of apostates, then his accomplishment would not be lesser than Alexander’s world-conquest’.⁶⁶

Here, Badauni had added whole new sentences to Nizam al-Din’s accounts, and yet the resulting effect is perfectly in line with some of the viewpoints of the author as reconstructed above. In this passage, too, Badauni would not accept any claim of celestiality on the part of the sultan. It was God who chose the recipients of his divine inspiration, not the other way around. Nor did he have any sympathy for kings who would try to enforce their claim by their earthly power. His opposition to the sultan’s imitating Alexander is particularly interesting and has further implications that will be discussed later. Suffice it to say that Badauni considered the proper duty of a Muslim king of India with military ambitions to be the capture of the forts of India (though significantly not the whole country) from non-Muslims and heterodox groups.

A look at Badauni’s treatment of the reign of Timur, the progenitor of the ruling monarchs of his day, will not only bring all the above points to the fore, but will also confirm the early observations teased out of his pages on Mahmud and Iltutmish. The section on Timur shows what massive invasions, enslavements, violence and destructions committed by heroic kings of old in India actually meant to a Muslim historian who was himself a native of that country. He described it thus:

Timur encamped near Delhi, and at this point, he ordered approximately fifty thousand captives who had been seized by the soldiers right up to the Ganges River to be mowed down by the sword as blades of grass. Even some of the theologians and preachers of his army, men who had never before known

⁶⁶ Badauni, *Mutakhab*, pp. 129–30. Downloaded from <http://mer.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

the sword, imagined all the Indian Muslim captives to be Hindus, and greedy for merit, ghaza, and jihad, sent them all to the everlasting kingdom with their own hands. The next day, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunctions granted amnesty to the population of the city and took the amnesty money and gifts from these folks. In the midst of this, the people of the city killed a few soldiers. On the fourth day, Timur ordered general enslavement and began taking everyone to Transoxiana. Until at last, Shaykh Ahmad Katthu, whose shrine in Gujarat near Ahmadabad is famous, went along with that army, met with the Lord of Auspicious Conjunction, argued with the ‘ulema and the worthy men in the army of Transoxiana, and obtained the release of all the captives. People of India owe a great debt to that Shaykh.⁶⁷

This bitter description brings to a head almost all the points Badauni had found reprehensible in the history of former kings. The pompous celestial title of Timur is sarcastically contrasted with his cruelty. The violation of amnesty, alluded to in an episode of Mahmud of Ghazna as well, stands out conspicuously. The random enslavement of people, also discussed in the analysis of the Ghaznavid parts, finds a terrible expression here. General slaughter and conquest in the name of ghaza and jihad by ignorant outsiders is scorned. To all this one might add the mocking of the ‘ulema, theologians, preachers and ‘worthy men’, who could not tell Muslim and Hindu apart, and had to be persuaded by a Sufi shaykh to let go an entire population.

Here, at last, one can propose some hypotheses for explaining the logic of *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* in dealing with the past of India. The author clearly had reservations about the behaviour of kings and their claims to power and authority, particularly when they invoked the divine in their abuse of such power. For a figure such as Mahmud of Ghazna, who, barring some accusations of miserliness, enjoyed a good reputation as a conquering hero of old, Badauni deleted what he found reprehensible in his deeds. This was probably intended to be a preventive measure for those who might wish to imitate the accomplishments of that king. Badauni certainly made it clear that he knew how some folks might take the wrong lesson from history.⁶⁸ In this, he was following the example of Nizam al-Din who, as argued above, made a crucial change in presenting the memory of Mahmud of Ghazna by choosing Gardizi’s account of that king over ‘Utbi’s.

Now, when it came to describing the rule of Timur, Badauni could employ a different editorial policy, viz., slight augmentation and full presentation of the warlord’s evil, since, again, as Irfan Habib has shown, the Timurid sack of Delhi had been censured broadly by most historians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In other words, there may have been a smaller danger in the 1580s and 1590s for any contemporary South Asian monarch to actively try and model

⁶⁷ Badauni, *Muntakhab*, p. 186, abridged.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2. Downloaded from <http://ier.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

himself after the Central Asian conqueror. Finally, for the reign of a monarch such as 'Ala al-Din Khalji whose behaviour had seemed most egregious to the author, and who perhaps was a bit lesser known than Mahmud of Ghazna and Timur, Badauni took more liberties and forthrightly inserted his commentary regarding the mischief of that king—viz., the invention of a new religion.

V

It should require no great leap of imagination to suppose that Badauni's view of these kings of the past was very much a product of the politics and ideas of the age and environment in which he lived and worked. The immediate events of course date to the period at the end of the sixteenth century when Akbar's new imperial ideology had reached its highpoint. The emperor had sought to identify his person with the empire as a whole, and had demanded a level of loyalty from his notables (beyond ancestral or communal bonds) that was to be acted out as symbolic discipleship to a spiritual, perhaps even divine, master.⁶⁹ Abu al-Fazl's *Akbarnamah* expressed these ideas most clearly. What this policy implied for pre-Mughal kings was in effect their rearrangement in a teleology of monarchy that reached its climax with the emperor who was presented as a kind of perfect man, a divine or semi-divine figure possessing esoteric knowledge that far surpassed any religious scholar, Sufi master, or even apocalyptic *mahdi*.⁷⁰ On the other hand, just as Badauni's sections on the reign of Akbar amounted to a searing criticism of the formation and enactment of this ideology during the emperor's reign, the pre-Mughal parts of the *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* were also designed to reverse or contradict the teleology of divine kingship that had been posited, albeit very briefly, by Abu al-Fazl in the *Akbarnamah*.

First and foremost, much of Badauni's editorial interferences noted above expunged the history of former sultans from any precedence of divine kingship. To appreciate this, one only needs to recall the demystification of sultans Mahmud (and his volatile spring), Ibrahim (and the fortress surrounded by the enchanted woods), and Iltutmish (and the heavenly chorus led by Gabriel praising his victory) in the context of the reports of miraculous events that were said to have harbingered the birth of Akbar, 'the emanation of God's light', as Abu al-Fazl and his brother Fayzi called him.⁷¹ Clearly Badauni did not want there to be anything in history that could give support to the theory of divine kingship on which, obviously, Akbar and Abu al-Fazl had relied heavily.

More to the point, the creation of what Badauni had thought to be a new religion by Akbar and Abu al-Fazl, the *din-i ilahi* or 'divine religion', had been foreshadowed and openly censured in the precedence of 'Ala al-Din Khalji.

⁶⁹ Richards, 'Imperial Ideology', pp. 287, 307 and 288–305.

⁷⁰ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, pp. 267; Mukhia, *Historians*, pp. 62, 73, 80–81; Richards, 'Imperial Ideology', p. 298.

⁷¹ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, p. 267; Richards, 'Imperial Ideology', p. 298.

A comparison of the relevant passages in the *Muntakhab* that deal with the establishment of the new religion by Khalji, as well as his dreams of world conquest, with the similar ambitions of Akbar provide a number of interesting parallels. For example, Badauni began his description of the building of the *ibadat khanah*, wherein were held metaphysical discussions from which the ideas of the new religion developed, with a phrase that echoed his introductory sentence dealing with the apostasy of ‘Ala al-Din. The two sentences run as follows: ‘In the beginning, a number of successive victories took place, and Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Khalji began to entertain some rotten ideas’;⁷² and for Akbar, ‘The reason for the building of this structure was that in that year a number of consecutive victories, great and wondrous, had taken place’.⁷³ What is implied here, both for Akbar and ‘Ala al-Din, is that the effects of winning a few battles had gone to their head, as it were, and had made them entertain dubious ideas. As for plans of world conquest, it seems that Akbar too had contemplated such an ambition. At least there are references to the matter in the prefaces of other histories written for the monarch. Nizam al-Din, for example, in the preface to his *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, had praised Akbar’s conquests in India and outside and had written, ‘I hope that the seven climes will become the cradle of security under the shadow of the banner of his majesty’s auspiciousness’.⁷⁴ The authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* too, as Rizvi has noted, had ‘suggested that the achievements of Akbar [were] far superior to the conquests of famous Saladin, [and had hoped] that the seven climes would soon be conquered and one of [Akbar’s] devoted servants appointed sultan in each’.⁷⁵ The similarity between the two monarchs are quite noteworthy, and Badauni’s equation of the religious and political ambitions of Akbar and ‘Ala al-Din Khalji reinforced his condemnation of court policies by using a precedence from bygone ages. Again, this was a subversion of the kind of historical teleology that would favour Akbar’s aspirations.

Now, having uncovered certain aspects of Badauni’s thinking as manifested in his treatment of historical events and sources, what can one say about his politics? First, it is clear that the author opposed fiercely the kind of royal absolutism that was developing around the person of Akbar, particularly as it claimed divine legitimacy. That the divine claims of Akbar were connected to his bid for exclusive power, and that in opposing the one Badauni also tried to curb the other, can be gleaned from reports regarding the *mahzar* or decree of 1579 that had given the emperor the power of *ijtihad* or independent and, in his case, ultimate, religious reasoning and decision-making. From the accounts of both Nizam al-Din and especially Badauni, one gets the impression that the drafting of the document and the signing of it by many of the leading ‘ulema amounted to a *coup* by Akbar and Abu al-Fazl, and relying on this text, the emperor could thenceforth override any

⁷² Badauni, *Muntakhab*, pp. 129–30.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, V. II: p. 137.

⁷⁴ Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, p. 261. Downloaded from <http://er.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

difference of opinion among religious scholars.⁷⁶ The implication of this act was quite obvious: Akbar was transforming himself into the supreme arbiter of the empire whose decisions could not be challenged by any legal opposition, seeing that he had a veto power over jurists. Badauni could not have approved of this. Regarding such matters, he wrote in the *Najat al-Rashid*, ‘It is said in the Hadith that “the disagreement of my [the prophet Muhammad’s] community is the munificence of God”, meaning that due to the honor that exist among [the prophet Muhammad’s] people, their disagreement is also a kind of munificence.’⁷⁷ Badauni does not mention Akbar here by name, but it is hard to imagine anyone who believed such a dictum could stomach the kind of unchecked arbitration that the emperor had empowered himself to enact upon the ‘ulema of Islam.

This opposition to royal absolutism lies at the basis of Badauni’s antagonism towards Akbar. However, while the author’s Sunni beliefs played a crucial role in defining his political stance, it would be misguided to dismiss him as a bigoted orthodox reactionary. This is so not only because such qualifiers are highly polemical and do little to provide a substantial understanding of Badauni’s thought, but also because the actual text of the *Muntakhab* often runs quite contrary to such an interpretation. For example, as Rizvi has noted repeatedly, Badauni spent page after page of his history denouncing and savagely mocking practically every Indian Muslim of religious pretensions, be they famous Sunni ‘ulema or otherwise.⁷⁸

What is more, many of Badauni’s positions and statements, both as manifested in the first volume of his history (analysed above) and in his religious tract *Najat al-Rashid* run remarkably close to Akbar’s in his most conciliatory gestures towards his Hindu subjects. Take the issue of slavery, for example. As noted above, Badauni had expunged from his sources those passages that described the bondage of local populations by the medieval conquerors of India, and had also deplored the profession as un-Islamic. However, curiously, Akbar too had made statements like this while abolishing in the 1560s the practice of enslavement of the family of those who had been killed or taken captive in war, causing as a result (according to Abu al-Fazl) the pacification of rebellious people (presumably both Muslim and otherwise) all over India who thenceforth willingly submitted to Mughal rule.⁷⁹ It is certainly worth noting how Badauni had taken a stance that echoed Akbar’s policy of imperial clemency and communal harmony. Indeed, Badauni’s very remark censuring the professional human trafficker along with the butcher resonated well with a statement by Akbar who, in line with Indian religious views, had abstained from cow flesh and had spoken against butchers ‘who have no occupation but taking lives’.⁸⁰ Noting these correspondences, perhaps one can suggest that Badauni’s other practices, such as his deleting of

⁷⁶ Mukhia, *Historians*, p. 70.

⁷⁷ Badauni, *Najat*, p. 111.

⁷⁸ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, pp. 107, 114, 287, 288.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386. Downloaded from <http://ier.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

the tales of the wreckage of Hindu temples by Muslim kings, may very well have been motivated by a conciliatory attitude towards the non-Muslim population of India, religious disagreements notwithstanding.

Indeed, Badauni's main vision for India, which was retrojected into bygone years, was the spread of Sunni Islam over the whole subcontinent. His statement, noted above, that a Muslim king should focus his energies on capturing the forts of India from apostates and non-Muslims clarify to some degree what he had in mind. The most important thing, it seems, was the establishment of the rule of Islam in South Asia. This required the holding of strategic and symbolic garrisons of power (forts), but presumably did not necessitate mass conversions or anything of the sort. By this logic, non-Muslim subjects who accepted the suzerainty of a Muslim king would be included into the fold. There is indeed a striking episode in the author's own life that supports this hypothesis. In this episode, which has been subjected to the mockery of some modern scholars, Badauni described how he had fought a 'ghaza' (religiously inspired incursion) against certain Hindu kings, but *under the command* of a loyal Rajput of Akbar by the name of Man Singh. This is in fact perfectly in line with the views of the author as expressed in his work of history. In other words, by accepting the over-lordship of Akbar, Man Singh the Rajput could legitimately wage ghaza for the emperor, and the learned 'orthodox' mullah, 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni, could partake in it without any qualms.

It is within the context of the events of exactly this period that the early parts of Badauni's *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* must be evaluated, not merely as a document for the reconstruction of the history of Islamic rule in India, but as the evidence of the contest over the definition of this history. This contest cannot be divided into easy binaries of secular vs fundamentalist. Various men, whether supporting the Mughal centralisation of power or not, retrojected into former eras their understanding of, and vision for, Islam and kingship in the subcontinent. To appreciate Badauni's position in all this, at least three paths may be followed simultaneously.

As for his anti-absolutism, one might explore the heritage of political and ethical writings as a whole in West and South Asia. Indeed, Badauni's viewpoints exhibit a number of interesting parallels with authors such as Barani or al-Ghazzali. For instance, in spite of all his acerbic denunciation of royal absolutism, Badauni in his *Najat al-Rashid* conceded the need for kings in order to prevent the outbreak of civil strife (*finta*).⁸¹ What is noteworthy, however, is that he himself did not heed such statements fully in the *History*. He wrote in *Najat al-Rashid*:

Even if kings be tyrannical, one should not speak ill of them. Rather one should pray for their wellbeing. This is so even if they had shown tyranny to a small group of people. They are indeed the instrument of security, welfare, and

⁸¹ Badauni, *Najat*, p.195
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relief for the whole world It is said in the hadith that ‘Your governors are as your deeds—they rule you in the way that you behave.’ Therefore one should not give thought to or speak of anything bad that they may do. Nor should one sit down with someone who speaks ill of them.⁸²

This is indeed a curious statement for it seems to militate against the author’s own language in the *Muntakhab*, particularly as directed against Akbar, and for which Badauni got into trouble later during the reign of Jahangir. However, this ambivalent attitude towards kingship is not peculiar to Badauni. Other political theorists before him had taken a quite practical, if cynical, view of the rule of kings. Ziya’ al-Din Barani (fl. 1284–1356), for example, had affirmed in his political treatise *Fatava-i Jahandari* (or ‘the precepts of world governance’) that while kings were necessary to serve as a control-measure against the natural evil, envy and rebelliousness of mankind, nevertheless, in the final analysis, the way of kings was the antithesis of an Islamic way of life. In a remarkable passage Barani had stated, ‘Know this, that the traditions and ways of the Sultans of the Persians [i.e., the Sasanian model he had just recommended to kings] is antithetical to the sunna and the life-style of the prophet Muhammad’, and he therefore urged the ruling monarch of the day to try to offset this infraction of the religious ideal by struggling to the utmost for the spread of Islam and justice.⁸³ Even al-Ghazzali (1058–1111), who considered it incumbent upon every person of faith to obey kings,⁸⁴ did on the rare occasion make remarks that suggested he viewed the political order of the day (as compared to the early years of the Muslim community) to be far from ideal. Regarding the need to deal sternly with the masses (*ra’yat*), al-Ghazzali wrote in his *Nasihat al-Muluk* (‘advice to kings’), that there certainly was a time when kings could live a simple life and the masses would obey them (as in the time of the Caliph ‘Umar), but those days were long over.⁸⁵ All in all, a thorough search of Badauni’s works, particularly his *Najat al-Rashid*, is required to identify his readings of the likes of Barani, al-Ghazzali, and others (such as Nasir al-Din Tusi).

But what of the other aspects of his thought? What, for example, of his personal involvement for the spread of the rule of Islam and his vehement dismissal of Sunni ‘ulema, which complemented his strong opposition to a royal absolutism that invoked god-given sanction for its legitimacy—towards what other paths of further research do these traits of Badauni direct us? It might be worthwhile to reevaluate the author’s connection with the *mahdavi* movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a formative influence. Following the teachings of Sayyid Muhammad of Jaunpur, who claimed to be, or was proclaimed by his followers, the awaited millenarian figure of Islam (the *Mahdi*), the *mahdavis* believed that a band of elites chosen from among common Muslims, distinguished

⁸² Badauni, *Najat*, p. 198.

⁸³ Barani, *Fatava*, pp. 142–43. See also Muzaffar Alam, ‘Shari’ā and Governance’, p. 223.

⁸⁴ al-Ghazzali, *Nasihat*, p. 81.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148 Downloaded from <http://ier.sagepub.com> at CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY on November 12, 2008

only for its piety (as opposed to social rank), should dedicate itself to the recreation of the original Muslim community of Medina right before the anticipated *hijri* millennium.⁸⁶ Affirming the historical mission of Islam, the *mahdavis* advocated equality among all Muslims, denounced social prestige derived from wealth, and strongly challenged the symbols of religious establishment, namely the ruling amirs and the prominent ‘ulema.⁸⁷ Indeed, Marshal Hodgson compared this movement to Kharijites of the early Islamic period, noted for their antinomian and egalitarian doctrines as well as their proactive attitude towards the social values of Islam.⁸⁸ That Badauni had strong *mahdavi* sympathies has been known since the days of Ferdinand Blochman, and have been more recently examined by Ahmed Azfar Moin in an MA thesis.⁸⁹ After all, as Derryl MacLean has noted, the movement exerted the most spellbinding magnetism on men at court, highly educated ‘ulema, and Sufis⁹⁰ (and Badauni had belonged to each of these groups at some point in his life). Finally, he would have had sustained exposure to them since we know that one of the greatest *mahdavi* leaders of the sixteenth century, Shaykh Mustafa Gujarati, had been presented at Akbar’s infamous ‘ibadat khanah in Fatehpur Sikri in 1574.⁹¹ Perhaps then, by exploring in more detail the relationship between ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni’s *mahdavi* sympathies and his political vision as expressed in his historical and religious writings, scholarship could come to a deeper appreciation of them.

The third point of interest is what I referred to above as the proprietary identification with India that is manifest in Badauni, and for that matter, in Nizam al-Din and Firishtah. This concern for India and its population, Muslim or not, high and low, is worth comparing both diachronically with earlier historians of Hindustan such Juzjani (author of *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*) or ‘Isami (who wrote *Futuh al-Salatin*), as well as synchronically with Safavid and perhaps even Ottoman historians of the sixteenth century and their attitude towards territory and population. The latter project would be particularly attractive as it might shed light on a broad Eurasian phenomenon that immediately prefigured the rise of nationalism. To point out just one possible clue with regard to territoriality, Sholeh Quinn has indicated that Safavid historiography began with universal chronicles in the sixteenth century, and ended up with works whose focus was solely the dynasty or a specific king. This she attributes to the need in the earlier phases of the Safavids to establish legitimacy vis-à-vis the neighbouring empires.⁹² It would be worth seeing whether this process involved staking claims to the heritage of antiquity, whereby the various dynastic possessions of the Safavid,

⁸⁶ MacLean, ‘The Sociology’, p. 151.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Hodgson, *Venture*, pp. 70–71.

⁸⁹ Moin, *Islamic Millennium*, especially pp. 32–68.

⁹⁰ MacLean, ‘The Sociology’, p. 153.

⁹¹ MacLean, ‘Real Men’, p. 199.

⁹² Quinn, *Historical Writing*, p. 28.

Shaybanid, Timurid, and Ottoman houses were identified with the available territorial categories such as Iran, Turan, Hind and Rum, and whether this process, coinciding with the rise of the centralised states of the early modern period, began the process by which individuals identified themselves with a territory and all the people who resided in it. All this remains purely conjectural, of course, until further research. However, following such leads, scholarship can certainly move towards a deeper understanding of the religious and cultural history of Eurasia in the sixteenth century, in which 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni played a significant role.

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